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R 021541Z MAR 83
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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SECTION 01 OF 05 BUENOS AIRES 01349

ROME FOR THE VATICAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: KPRP, PGOV, AR
SUBJECT: POLITICAL REVIEW OF THE BIGNONE ADMINISTRATION

1. [REDACTED] - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: ARGENTINA'S DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION IS PROCEEDING SLOWLY AND NOT PARTICULARLY SMOOTHLY. BUT ALMOST HALF WAY THROUGH THE PROCESS, THE PACE SEEMS RELENTLESS, NOTWITHSTANDING THE RECURRING CRISES EVERYONE EXPECTED. ELECTIONS HAVE NOW BEEN SET FOR OCTOBER 30, WITH THE WINNERS SCHEDULED TO TAKE OFFICE 90 DAYS LATER. PRESIDENT BIGNONE'S FEBRUARY 28 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TIMETABLE MARKS ANOTHER ACHIEVEMENT FOR HIM FEW WOULD HAVE PREDICTED EIGHT MONTHS AGO. THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE NOW QUITE ACTIVE AND THE ARMED SERVICES PASSIVE, BUT NOT WITHOUT PERIODIC DISPLAYS OF INTERNAL STRESS OVER THE RAPID APPROACH OF CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT; THE

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JUNTA, HOWEVER, APPEARS IN CONTROL OF THAT. THE OVER-

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ALL IMPRESSION AT THIS POINT IN THE PROCESS IS ONE OF A GOVERNMENT TAKING HARASSING FIRE FROM EVERY QUARTER, BUT NONETHELESS SHOWING SOME SELF-ASSURANCE AS IT WORKS TO WIND UP ITS AFFAIRS AS TIDILY AS POSSIBLE.
END SUMMARY.

A. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

3. WE HAVE REFERRED TO THE POPULAR IMAGE OF REYNALDO BIGNONE AS A NICE GUY. HE HAS USED THE ASSET EFFECTIVELY TO KEEP THE ATTENTION OF THE COUNTRY FIXED ON THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S PROMISE TO RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE 12 MONTHS ARE OUT. HE HAS ALSO MOVED WITH SOME DEFTNESS AROUND THE OBSTACLES HIS NOMINAL BOSSES, THE THREE SERVICE COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, SEEM CONTINUOUSLY TO HAVE SET IN HIS WAY. AND HE HAS DONE SO IN A DIFFICULT ENVIRONMENT: A BAD ECONOMIC SITUATION HAS BROUGHT STRONG AND COMPETING PRESSURES FROM ALL SECTORS AT A TIME WHEN THE MORAL AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS VANISHED. AS ONE EDITORIALIST PUT IT, "WHEN THIS GOVERNMENT DOES BADLY, IT DOES IT WELL; WHEN IT TRIES TO DO GOOD, IT DOES SO BADLY." YET, DESPITE THE PERILS-OF-PAULINE CAREER OF HIS ADMINISTRATION, BIGNONE HASN'T DONE BADLY AT ALL, THUS FAR

4. HE WAS IMPOSED AS PRESIDENT LAST JULY BY THE ARMY AT A CHAOTIC MOMENT AFTER THE MALVINAS DISASTER, WHEN THE NAVY AND AIR FORCE WERE TEMPORARILY OUT OF THE JUNTA. IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS, ONE OF THE CENTRAL FIGURES IN HIS CABINET, THE ECONOMY MINISTER, HAD QUIT. NOT LONG AFTER THAT BIGNONE HAD TO TAKE TO THE AIRWAVES TO PROCLAIM HIMSELF IN CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE SERVICES; HE WAS RESPONDING THEN, AS HE

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HAS HAD TO DO ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS SINCE, TO RUMORS AND PUBLISHED REPORTS THAT HE WAS ABOUT TO BE REMOVED. BY OCTOBER, BIGNONE HAD STEADIED UP CONSIDERABLY, HAVING GOT BY THE FIRST PUBLIC TESTS OF HIS COMMITMENT TO TOLERATE DISSENT (WITHIN LIMITS) AND TO "DIALOGUE" WITH THE POLITICIANS. IN FACT, HE USED THE FIRST OF THESE, CGT-BRAZIL'S SEPTEMBER 23 MARCH FOR "PEACE, BREAD AND WORK", TO KEEP THE LABOR MOVEMENT SPLIT; HE QUIETED THE RIVAL CGT-AZOPARDO WITH A "65 PERCENT LOAF" OF WAGE

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INCREASES, A TACTIC HE HAS CONTINUED INTO THE FIRST MONTHS OF THIS YEAR TO HELP MAINTAIN THE DIVISION OF LABOR. THE COMMUNIST PARTY WAS PERMITTED TO STAGE ITS FIRST RALLY AND THE PERONISTS DID LIKEWISE WITH THEIR "DAY OF LOYALTY" TO PERON ON OCTOBER 16. ABOUT THE SAME TIME, THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, THOUGH LACKING A PERMIT TO MARCH, WERE STILL ALLOWED TO STAGE THEIR FIRST MASS DEMONSTRATION. THESE AND SIMILAR EVENTS AROUSED THE IRE OF MANY MILITARY OFFICERS. MORE UNNERVING TO THEM, AND TO WIDER SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY, WERE DECEMBER'S NATIONAL STRIKE AND THE MONSTER RALLY AT THE PLAZA DE MAYO. BIGNONE'S CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH THE PARTIES RESUMED IN FEBRUARY JUST AS THE JUNTA RETURNED FROM SUMMER HOLIDAY IN A TESTY MOOD WITH IMPUDENT POLITICIANS, AND A NEW WAVE OF RUMORS HERALDED TERMINAL DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE CHIEFS. SO FAR THEY REMAIN SPECULATION. IN BIGNONE'S VIEW THEY ARE DESTABILIZING IN INTENT, AS HE SAID FEBRUARY 28, AND WILL CONTINUE; HE SAID HE WILL IGNORE THEM.

5. THE PRESIDENT HAS HAD OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS, WHICH WERE NOT PARTICULARLY NOTED AS SUCH AT THE TIME. THE GOA AGREED TO LIFT WARTIME FINANCIAL SANCTIONS WITH THE UK, PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE IMF AGREEMENTS, A MOVE STRONGLY OPPOSED IN THE MILITARY, ESPECIALLY THE AIR FORCE; HE GOT AN EXTENSION (PROROGA) OF THE TREATY WITH

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CHILE ON PEACEFUL SETTLEMENTS DENOUNCED BY GALTIERI PRIOR TO THE TREATY'S 1982 EXPIRY, THUS KEEPING THE POPE'S MEDIATION OF THE BEAGLE DISPUTE ALIVE. ANOTHER TRIUMPH WHICH HAD TO REFLECT POSITIVELY ON BIGNONE WAS ARGENTINA'S POST-MALVINAS DIPLOMACY IN THE UN AND THE OAS. HE WILL ATTEND THE NAM SUMMIT THIS MONTH AS A FOLLOW-UP, BUT THERE COULD BE RISK FOR HIM THERE IF HE IS SEEN CONSORTING WITH BRIGANDS AND COMES BACK WITH LITTLE OR NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT. PROBABLY THE GREATEST DISPLAY OF SELF-ASSURANCE, HOWEVER, WAS THE WAY BIGNONE PICKED UP THE PIECES OF THE JUNTA'S "CONCERTACION" GAMBIT. THE THREE COMMANDERS ON THEIR OWN AND WITH NO REFERENCE TO BIGNONE ON NOVEMBER 7 ISSUED A 15-POINT SET OF CONDITIONS IT PROPOSED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES AS ITS PRICE FOR GIVING UP POWER. INDIGNATION AND RIDICULE GREETED THIS CLUMSY SALLY, BUT BIGNONE, REPORTEDLY VERY DISPLEASED BY THE JUNTA'S INITIATIVE, MANAGED TO CAPITALIZE ON ITS FAILURE. THE FIRST PROPOSAL OF THE "CONCERTACION", AN ACCORD ON AN ELECTORAL TIMETABLE, WAS "RE-EMPTED" BY

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THE PRESIDENT TO STAGE THE SECOND ROUND WITH THE PARTIES AS A PRELUDE TO HIS OWN PROGRAM, ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 28.

5. THROUGHOUT THESE EPISODES, BIGNONE HAS HAD TO OPERATE IN THE LONG SHADOW OF THE JUNTA. IN THE FIRST WEEKS OF FEBRUARY, MILITARY SOURCES VARIOUSLY CHARACTERIZED AS "HIGH", "AUTHORIZED" AND/OR "WELL-INFORMED" WERE TELLING THE NEWSPAPERS THAT THE JUNTA WAS CLIPPING HIS WINGS. HIS BRIEF WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON ELECTORAL MODALITIES WAS TO BE SEVERELY CIRCUMSCRIBED, AND HE WAS TO BE TOLD TO ADJUST HIS ECONOMIC POLICY

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SUBSTANTIALLY. THE JUNTA WAS ALSO MAKING LIFE UNCOMFORTABLE FOR BIGNONE BY TAKING AFTER POLITICIANS WHOSE REMARKS THE MILITARY FOUND DISRESPECTFUL (READ ALSO AS INTERNALLY DISRUPTIVE); THE GOVERNMENT AS A CONSEQUENCE WARNED ONE POLITICAL FIGURE AND SUPPRESSED A WEEKLY MAGAZINE TO SHOW ITS TOUGHNESS. NONE OF THIS SEEMED TO FAZE BIGNONE TOO MUCH, HOWEVER, AND HE CONTINUED TO GREET PARTY REPRESENTATIVES AT HIS RESIDENCE. ONE POLITICAL INTERLOCUTOR NOTED BIGNONE'S BONHOMIE WAS STILL INTACT BY QUOTING HIM AS KIDDING: "IF YOU DON'T PUT A STOP TO YOUR SLOGAN, 'FIGHT AND THEY WILL GO', WE'LL EMPLOY ONE OF OUR OWN: 'QUIT BUGGING US OR WE'LL STAY'". BIGNONE'S PRESS SPOKESMAN ON ANOTHER OCCASION SEEMED TO BE HAVING A LITTLE FUN WITH MILITARY POMPOSITY WHEN HE SAID HE WOULD NEITYKOY "RATIFY NOR RECTIFY" A REPORT THE PRESIDENT HAD TOLD ONE GROUP THE ELECTION WOULD BE HELD OCTOBER 16. THE PHRASE IS THE JUNTA'S, USED IN ITS STERN ORDER TO VICTOR MARTINEZ, A UCR VICE-PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANT, TO CLARIFY AN OFFENSIVE STATEMENT. (MARTINEZ IN THE EVENT "RATIFIED" HIS REMARK. HE ALSO "RECTIFIED" IT BY CLAIMING HE WAS QUOTED OUT OF CONTEXT. THAT SEEMS

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TO HAVE ENDED THE MATTER. IN FACT, THE POLITICIANS APPEAR TO HAVE TONED DOWN THE ANTI-MILITARY RHETORIC MARKEDLY, GIVING THE MILITARY SPOKESMEN SOME SATISFACTION.)

7. ENCOURAGING THE PRESIDENT IN HIS SLIGHTLY DARING MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS UNDER THE CLOSE TUTELAGE OF THE JUNTA MUST BE THE ATTITUDE OF ARMY CINC NICOLAIDES. EARLY IN THE BIGNONE TERM, "NICO" BETRAYED WHAT MANY THOUGHT WERE SIGNS OF HIS OWN AMBITION TO BE PRESIDENT. THAT SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED. NICOLAIDES HAS BEEN SEEN THE PAST MONTH EITHER TAKING PART IN THE UNUSUAL NUMBER OF JUNTA MEETINGS OR EXHORTING THE TROOPS. HIS MESSAGE FROM BOTH PLATFORMS IS THAT "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" IS PROCEEDING AS THE MILITARY PLANNED IT, COUPLED WITH THE WARNING THAT SOME "SECTORS" ARE BLACKGUARDING THE GOOD NAME OF THE ARMED FORCES AND COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERRUPTING THE PROCESS. THE MESSAGE ALSO ATTEMPTS TO COMFORT THOSE CONCERNED WITH

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RETRIBUTION FOR THE DIRTY WAR OR UPSET WITH THE
PRESENT ORDER, AS ARE RETIRED OFFICERS WHO SIGNED A
STATEMENT SHARPLY CRITICAL OF NICOLAIDES' LEADERSHIP
IN JANUARY. "SECURITY AND POLICE FORCES HAVE BEATEN
SUBVERSION", NICOLAIDES SAID IN MENDOZA FEBRUARY 15
IN A SPEECH WHOSE FULL TEXT WAS PUBLICIZED. "THERE-
FORE THERE OBTAINS ALL PERTINENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR
THEM AS VICTORS OF A BATTLE...I HAVE COMMITTED ALL
MY AUTHORITY, PRESTIGE AND EVEN MY LIFE TO ASSURE THAT
EACH MAN WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EFFORT WILL HAVE THE
SUPPORT EXPECTED FOR A COMBATANT WHO ACTED WITHIN THE
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF HIS SERVICE". ON THE
POSSIBILITY OF A COUP D'ETAT, THE CINC ACKNOWLEDGED
THERE WAS DISQUIET IN THE ARMED FORCES BUT HE
INDICATED HE DID NOT TAKE IT TOO SERIOUSLY. "I'VE
COUNTED 32 PLOTS AGAINST MYSELF IN THE PAST SEVEN

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MONTHS". HE SAID. HIS JOCULARITY WAS UNUSUAL BUT NOT HIS REFRAIN: THE MILITARY IS COMMITTED EQUALLY TO "INSTITUTIONALIZATION" AND TO PROTECTION OF ITS OWN FROM UNJUST REPRISALS.

8. WHILE NICOLAIDES HAS BEEN THE CENTER OF ATTENTION ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, HIS NAVY PARTNER IN THE JUNTA CINC RUBEN FRANCO, HAS AVOIDED THE LIMELIGHT AND HIS SERVICE HAS BEEN OUTWARDLY QUIET, BUT NOT THE AIR FORCE OR ITS COMMANDER JORGE HUGHES. HUGHES ANNOUNCED EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT ARGENTINA'S ANSWER TO THE POPE ON THE BEAGLE MEDIATION WOULD BE LEFT FOR A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT TO MAKE. LATER REMARKS BY BIGNONE, JUNTA MEETINGS ON THE SUBJECT AND RECENT PUBLISHED SPECULATION THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT MAY MAKE SOME SORT OF REPLY TO THE VATICAN SUGGEST THERE IS SOME MOVEMENT IN THE DISPUTE WITH CHILE ON THE ARGENTINE SIDE; THE GENERAL FEELING REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL INHERIT THE PROBLEM. THE AIR FORCE WAS BUSY ELSEWHERE ON THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TURF. IT PRODUCED

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AN AUDIT WHICH STARTLED THE NATION WITH THE NEWS THAT THE FOREIGN DEBT HAD BEEN OVERSTATED BY THE ECONOMY MINISTER BY SOME 5 BILLION DOLLARS. BESIDES RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPETENCE OF BIGNONE'S ECONOMIC TEAM, AND ITS SURVIVABILITY, THE AIR FORCE HAS GIVEN NEW AMMUNITION TO THE SUPERNATIONALISTS TO ASK HOW THE PATRIMONY OF THE NATION WAS HANDED OVER TO THE INTERNATIONAL BANKERS. AND WHO IS TO BE CALLED TO ACCOUNT FOR THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS. IN THIS REGARD, HUGHES FELT CONSTRAINED TO DISOWN SOME OF HIS OWN ULTRAS WHO TOLD THE PRESS THE AIR FORCE WOULD SEEK TO BRING TO BOOK FORMER ECONOMIC MINISTER MARTINEZ DE HOS. STILL THE NATION'S MOST REVILED FIGURE AND HIS TEAM IN VARIOUS CRIMINAL CHARGES. HUGHES SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR.

THE AIR FORCE

THE AIR FORCE IS THE MAINSTAY OF THE JUNTA. IT IS THE ONLY BRANCH OF THE JUNTA WHICH HAS NOT BEEN THE TARGET OF THE PATRIMONY OF THE NATION.

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WITH AS POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS BEGIN TO QUALIFY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTIONS (10 HAVE SO FAR MADE THE CUT). DEADLINE FOR THE AFFILIATION OF PARTY MEMBERSHIPS HAS BEEN MOVED UP TO MARCH 30 TO FIT THE OCTOBER ELECTION DATE. IT IS STILL UNOFFICIAL, BUT JUNE 30 IS EXPECTED TO BE THE FINAL DAY FOR THE PARTIES TO COMPLETE THEIR INTERNAL ORGANIZATION, WITH CANDIDATES TO BE ANNOUNCED BY AUGUST 30. THE ELECTORAL LAW SETTING OUT THE RULES FOR THE ELECTION ITSELF IS STILL BEING DECIDED, ALTHOUGH BIGNONE SEEMED TO MAKE IT CLEAR FEBRUARY 28 THERE WILL BE NO DIRECT VOTE FOR PRESIDENT AND THE ALMOST CERTAIN SECOND-ROUND RUNOFF

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THAT SYSTEM WOULD ENTAIL. THE ISSUES, MEANWHILE, ARE WELL KNOWN AND REPETITIOUSLY VOICED BY THE PLAYERS ON THE SCENE; THE ECONOMIC CRISIS FAR AND AWAY DOMINATES BUT DOES NOT EXCLUDE OTHER QUESTIONS SUCH AS THE DISAPPEARED. THESE ISSUES HAVE FORMED THE AGENDA FOR THE PRESIDENT'S "DIALOGUES" WHOSE MAIN COMPETITION IN THE PRESS HAS BEEN THE OBSCURE BUT IMPORTANT BATTLES FOR ASCENDANCY IN THE TWO MAIN ORGANIZATIONS, THE JUSTICIALIST (PERONIST) AND RADICAL PARTIES.

10. IN THE LATTER THE LINES ARE MOST CLEARLY DRAWN. PRE-CANDIDATE OF THE RADICALS' LEFT WING, RAUL ALFONSIN, HAD A SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN TOUR THAT BOTH PROJECTED HIM AS A MAN WHO CAN DEAL WITH THE WORLD AND HAS DRAWN FIRE AT HOME THAT MAY BE TELLING LATER. HIS RIVAL, FERNANDO DE LA RUA, WITH FORMER VICE PRESIDENT CARLOS PERETTE AS HIS RUNNING MATE, FORMALLY LAUNCHED HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PARTY NOMINATION IN FEBRUARY, TWO MONTHS AFTER THE ALFONSIN-MARTINEZ TICKET WAS FORMED. WHILE EACH MANEUVERS FOR ADVANTAGE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE PARTY MACHINERY, THEY VIE FOR ATTENTION IN PUBLIC APPEARANCES. DE LA RUA, THOUGHT TO BE PERSONALLY MORE ATTRACTIVE BUT OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE BLUE COLLAR SET, STICKS TO THE HIGH ROAD WITH RHETORIC ABOUT THE DEMANDS OF "OUR GENERATION". ALFONSIN IS MORE AT THE ISSUES, SAYING FEBRUARY 20 IN CORDOBA THAT WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN THIS ELECTION IS HUMAN RIGHTS, CLARIFICATION OF THE DISAPPEARED, ENDING THE STATE OF SIEGE AND, LAST, ECONOMIC REACTIVATION.

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ALTHOUGH ALFONSIN HITS HARDER ON THE DISAPPEARED THAN HIS RIVALS IN EITHER MAJOR PARTY, HE ADVOCATES TURNING THE ISSUE OVER TO THE JUDICIARY RATHER THAN ANY SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS OR TRIBUNALS, AND HE HAS DISOWNED EXCITED SUPPORTERS WHO OCCASIONALLY CALL FOR REVENGE. THE CONSERVATIVE PRESS SEEMS TO HAVE SINGLED HIM OUT AS ITS MAJOR TARGET. "LA PRENSA"

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DEPICTS HIS HUMAN RIGHTS STANCE AS AN APOLOGIA FOR TERRORISM AND HIS ATTACKS ON CONSERVATIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES, THE FINANCIAL COMMUNITY AND THE MULTI-NATIONALS AS A REFLECTION OF HIS ALLEGED "SOCIALIST-MARXIST" LINE.

11. THE JUSTICIALIST PARTY NOW HAS TWO DECLARED PRE-CANDIDATES, RAUL MATERA, THE NEUROSURGEON WHO WAS THOUGHT AT ONE TIME TO BE JUAN PERON'S HEIR, AND FORMER MINISTER OF INTERIOR, DEFENSE AND FOREIGN

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AFFAIRS IN THE LAST PERON GOVERNMENT, ANGEL ROBLEDO. AS WITH RADICALISM, HOWEVER, THE MAIN EVENT IS THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE PARTY AND, IN PERONISM'S LARGER SENSE, THE MOVEMENT -- MOST IMPORTANTLY ENDORSEMENT BY ORGANIZED LABOR. ONE EFFORT TO OUST THE PRESENT PARTY LEADERSHIP, MOUNTED BY FORMER CORRIENTES GOVERNOR AND PERONIST FINANCIAL ANGEL JULIO ROMERO, FAILED BADLY. THE TARGET OF THE PLOY, VP AND NOMINAL PARTY CHIEF DEOLINDO BITTEL, INTERESTINGLY WAS SUPPORTED BY THE JUSTICIALISTS'

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GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED JUDICIAL OVERSEER, WHO RULED ROMERO LEGALLY OUT OF BOUNDS; HIS RULING WAS NOT APPEALED. BITTEL NOW IS PLANNING WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE A DECISIVE PARTY CONGRESS NEXT WEEK TO BEGIN RESTRUCTURING THE ORGANIZATION. MEANWHILE, KING-MAKERS, CANDIDATES AND HANGERS-ON EITHER SHAPE OR AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS. ONE BEING WATCHED MOST CAREFULLY IS FORMER PRESIDENT MARIA ISABEL MARTINEZ DE PERON, WHO KEEPS HER SILENCE IN SPANISH EXILE. PERSISTENT REPORTS THAT THE JUNTA IS CONSIDERING LIFTING THE POLITICAL BAN IMPOSED ON HER BY THE MILITARY AFTER SHE WAS OVERTHROWN HYPNOTIZE MAKEUP MEN IN THE NEWSPAPERS. SUCH REPORTS ADD TO THE MULTIPLE WORRIES OF THE AVERAGE MILITARY MAN IN GOOD STANDING WITH HIS INSTITUTION. THEY MAY BE EVEN MORE UNSETTLING TO PERONISTS WHO EITHER ARE STICKING THEIR HEADS UP TO SAY "I WANT TO BE PRESIDENT", OR ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED WITH ESTABLISHING SOME MODICUM OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN PERONISM IN PLACE OF ITS RIGIDLY AUTOCRATIC HIERARCHY. THE SEETHING POLITICS OF PERONISM MAY BECOME A LITTLE CLEARER IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.

12. THE MINIPARTIES, GROUPED ON THE FRINGES OR IN A SMALL CENTER SPACE, NORMALLY WOULD BE IGNORED WITH ALL THE ATTENTION GIVEN THE MAIN CONTENDERS, BUT NOT SO. PRACTICALLY ALL HAVE HAD THEIR INNINGS AT OLIVOS, THE PRESIDENTIAL "QUINTA" WHERE BIGNONE HAS HELD THE DIALOGUE, COMPLETE WITH SATURATION PRESS COVERAGE; THE NOTABLE HOLDOUTS ARE THE HAUGHTY AND OUTSPOKEN OSCAR ALENDE AND HIS APTLY-NAMED INTRANSIGENTS AND A

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DISAFFECTED SPLINTER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, WHO
REFUSED TO DIALOGUE. THE MORE PROMINENT OF THESE GROUPS
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CAN USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH GOVERNMENT TO GET ON TO THE
TV IN THE EVENING; THEY ALL SCRAMBLE FOR A MOMENT WITH
THE CALL-IN HOSTS ON MORNING RADIO. MOST ARGUE FOR AN
ELECTORAL SYSTEM, WHEN PROMULGATED, THAT ESTABLISHES
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (GIVING THEM A CHANCE AT
SEATS IN CONGRESS). SOME, LIKE THE POPULAR FEDERAL
FORCES GROUP (FUFEP), TOLD BIGNONE THAT THE CONSTITU-
TION SHOULD BE AMENDED TO PROVIDE FOR A SHORTENED
PRESIDENTIAL TERM (SIX TO FOUR YEARS). ONLY ONE,
THE REDOUBTABLE CHAMPION OF LOST CAUSES, ALVARO
ALSOGARAY, THE FORMER ECONOMY MINISTER WHOSE SMALL
BAND OF SUPPLY-DEMAND PURISTS IS GIVEN NO CHANCE BY
ANYBODY, SAID HE ASKED FOR NOTHING; ONLY THAT THE
MILITARY GOVERNMENT BRING ITS AFFAIRS TO AN ORDERLY
CONCLUSION PROMPTLY. A ONCE BRIGHTLY TWINKLING
POLITICAL STAR WHO HAS RECENTLY BEEN SCARCE, FORMER
NAVY COMMANDER EMILIO MASSERA, ALSO SHOWED UP AT BIG-
NONE'S QUINTA, PROMOTING WHAT HE MUST BELIEVE ARE
POPULAR STEPS TO LIFT THE BAN ON MRS. PERON AND TO
"CONTINUE HOSTILITIES" WITH THE UK (SIC).

C. CONCLUSIONS

13. THE ACCELERATING STIR OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY SEEMS
TO SAY THE COUNTRY IS FINALLY ENTERING THE LAST PHASE
OF THE MILITARY'S "PROCESS OF NATIONAL REORGANIZATION" --
THE RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, WHICH ITS FRAMERS
STILL SAY THEY INTENDED ALL ALONG THE WAY FROM THE 1976
TAKEOVER. IN ALL SECTORS THE CONSENSUS IS BUILDING
THAT RETURN OF THE CIVILIANS CANNOT BE DEFERRED, IF FOR
NO OTHER REASON THAN THE MANIFEST EXHAUSTION OF THE
MILITARY GOVERNMENT. A SMALL THING LIKE THE INTERIOR
MINISTRY'S CONTRACTING FOR BALLOT BOXES (ABOUT 10 DOLLARS
APIECE) TO BE USED IN THE COUNTRY'S 75,000 POLLING PLACES
GETS INORDINATE PUBLICITY; MINUTE PRESS ATTENTION IS GIVEN
TO THE LARGER ACTIVITIES OF GOVERNMENT, BOTH THE EXECU-
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INFO	OCT-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	AID-07	INR-10	EUR-01	SS-10
	CIAE-00	EB-08	DODE-00	H-01	NSC-01	NSAE-00	HA-08
	L-03	TRSE-00	PM-09	PA-01	SAL-01	USIE-00	SP-02
	SNP-01	PRS-01	/081 W				

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R 021541Z MAR 83
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6585
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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TIVE BRANCH AND THE JUNTA, PREPARING ITS OWN DEPARTURE, AS WELL AS TO THE OPAQUE DOINGS OF THE POLITICIANS WHICH HAVE THE SAME GOAL. THE REGIME, IT WOULD SEEM, GOVERNS BY DEADLINES AND HOLDS POPULAR SUFFERANCE ONLY AS LONG AS IT MEETS THEM.

14. WE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT AT THIS POINT, GIVEN THE MULTIPLE THREATS HANGING OVER HIM OF ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, SOCIAL STRIFE AND A KICKING OVER OF THE TRACES BY INTRACTABLE MILITARY OFFICERS, BIGNONE HAS DONE WELL IN GUIDING NATIONAL AFFAIRS. SKILL MAY FAIL HIM OR HIS LUCK COULD RUN OUT, OR BOTH. THE QUESTION OF THE DISAPPEARED PROMISES TO BE PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS FOR HIM. THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, JUST COMPLETING A SUCCESSFUL TOUR OF EUROPE WHERE THEY WERE RECEIVED WITH SYMPATHY AND CELEBRITY BY MITTERAND, GONZALES, PERTINI AND THE POPE, TO MENTION JUST A FEW, CONTINUE TO STOKES THE ISSUE, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT PREPARES THIS MONTH TO ISSUE ITS PROMISED REPORT ON THE MATTER WHICH SHOULD SATISFY FEW. ANOTHER REPORT TO BE MADE PUBLIC, ON THE

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POLITICAL-MILITARY CONDUCT OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC WAR, IS DUE IN MAY AND COULD THROW UNFORESEEN NEW OBSTACLES UP FOR RATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF AFFAIRS. CARRYING MORE HIGH VOLTAGE THAN EITHER OF THESE QUESTIONS IS THE SELF-AMNESTY OF THE MILITARY BEFORE THEY LEAVE OFFICE, A FAVORITE TOPIC OF THOSE TRYING TO EASE THE MILITARY FROM POWER. BUT BIGNONE SEEMS DETERMINED TO KEEP AT IT. HE WANTS TO BE, IF NOT THE LAST DE FACTO PRESIDENT OF ARGENTINA EVER AS HE IS FOND OF SAYING, THEN AT LEAST THE FINAL PRESIDENT IN THIS PROCESS. BUSHNELL

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